BANNED! In 46 Countries!

HERB SCHRADER'S

VIDEOMANIA!

#2

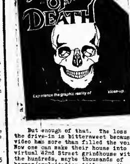
FACES OF DEATH &
FACES OF DEATH II (date unknown) (in color)
PROD: Rosilyn T. Scott
DIR : Conan Lecilaire
SCR : Alan Black

Narrator & "Creative Consultant": Dr. Francis B. GROSS

Originally, VIDEOMANIA was supposed to be called DRIVE-IN MANIA or something like that, but when it came time to write the first issue I looked around and sadly accepted the truth. Drive-Ins are a dying breed. Rising land costs prohibit a 6 month a year business. Competition from pay-TV services and video movie clubs only hurt. But incredibily unimaginative, inept management is the major culprit of Columbus' drive-in decline.

The HOLIDAY drive-in is a prime example. Instead of, say, being the only theater in town to show an exploitation or horror or camp triple bill, it chooses to screen the same Hollywood fare one can see at 5 or 6 indoor houses throughout town. For $4.00 a shot, you consistantly (at least the last 10 years) get the flick projected to you in daylight. After 15 minutes or so it STARTS to get dark.

CCC drive-in has radio sound. Great! The only problem is that the hiss, pop, and crackle sounds that emanate from their shitty transmitter forces me back to the old pole speakers everytime. The EASTMAIN would be great, but a gigantic lighted Kroger sign blares right into the screen and washes out the picture's contrast (Sunday night's OK, its the one night its turned off). The SOUTH has, by far, the brightest,crispest picture, and does show its share of exploitation (in 1984 I saw THE CORPSE GRINDERS, BLOODEATERS, the very demented David Hess in THE HOUSE ON THE EDGE OF THE PARK, Bob Clark's IT CAME FROM THE GRAVE (NIGHTDREAMS), TWISTED THROAT, NIGHT OF THE ZOMBIES, Hennlotter's great BASKET CASE to name a FEW) but its derelict atmosphere reminds one of post-nuclear Hiroshima.



But enough of that. The loss of the drive-in is bittersweet because video has more than filled the void. Now one can make their house into a virtual 42nd Street grindhouse with the hundreds, maybe thousands of horror/exploitation titles on the market. Two extraordinary video releases, for better or worse, are the FACES OF DEATH movies.
.....the lights dim...the VHS tape creeps slowly through the deck...the screen's frenatic snowstorm eases into blackness..... you see:

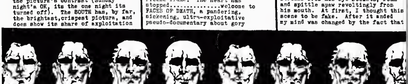
a heart; a beating human heart exposed to the world via open-heart surgery (and the FACES OF DEATH candid camera positioned about 2 inches away). The faint thumping grows louder and louder. Cut to the weakening, blipping heart monitor. Freeze frame. The heart has stopped...............welcome to FACES OF DEATH, a pandering, sickening, ultra-exploitative pseudo-documentary about gory deaths, crazed cults, and tragic accidents. Some incidents are actual, some are obviously staged.

If you can handle it, FACES OF DEATH Provides a perfectly demented night of viewing.

Enter supposed Doctor, Dr. Frances B. Gross (sort of a Johnny B. Goode of gore movies I guess), our host. "Unfortunately, medical science cannot always have success. The moment death occurs, my expertise is called upon. When this organ (he holds up preserved heart for all to see) ceased to function, the result was death, one reality we cannot avoid. I'm Dr. Frances B. Gross. I work as a pathologist, and over the last 20 years, I've compiled a library of the many faces of death. My travels have taken me all over the world, searching for the various situations that have dealt with our ultimate end. I've seen with my own eyes (Criswell like) a myriad of experiences that have led me to a greater awareness. "We have developed a world that refuses to recognize our own destiny. Many years ago, I was plagued with a reoccuring dream...." With that over with, on with the gore:

SEE! An actual AUTOPSY. Not only is the kind Doctor nice enough to explictly pick through all the individual organs, he saws off the skull and extracts the brain. For a bonus, watch him peel the facial skin off the cadaver so we know what a faceless, bloody head looks like. Of course, not to be rude, he replaces the poor guy's face.

WITNESS! The electrocution of some poor sap who killed a little old lady for some petty cash. As usual, the camera dwells on the morose. The static lens never flinches as the soon to be dead's eyes are taped shut, so they don't pop out during the execution. Editing is non-existant as his body is overtaken by electricity. As his frame contorts and trembles, blood streams from his eye sockets; foam and spittle spew revoltingly from his mouth. At first, I thought this scene to be fake. After it ended my mind was changed by the fact that



his non-budget compilation probably couldn't afford an actor who could aradize an execution THAT GOOD! I wouldn't bet my life on it, but I think it was real.

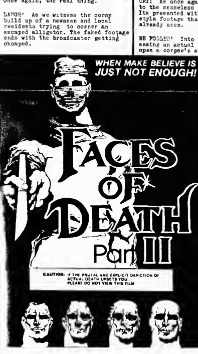
ASSAULT YOUR MIND! As the Doc tries to pull off an obviously fake, staged assination of some great World Statesman, as the real thing. I've seen worse real stuff on the nightly news.

PUKE! As we watch some obscure jungle women spit into an ancient recipe root solution for fermentation purposes, and then drink it. Ugh!

BRISTLE! As police cameras bring us into a suburban ex-household where Mike Lawrence, the dad, went berzerk and slaughtered his family. See the bloody corpses strewn about the kitchen. This time the real sickening thing.

WATCH! The fanatical Moslems once again leave their fellow man wracked as FACES OF DEATH's camera captures an isolated, desert decapitation. Once again, the real thing.

LAUGH! As we witness the corny build up of a newsman and local residents trying to corner an escaped alligator. The faked footage ends with the broadcaster getting chomped.



CRINGE! As we watch a group of happy, but ugly Americans dine on the delectable treat, monkey brains. What seems to be another fake scene turns out to be grotesquely real. Amid the clan's laughter and cackle are close-ups of the monkey getting its head stuffed through a hole in a table. Then the sickness begins. The two men, armed with hammers, beat the monkey savagely until it's dead (the editing gets around any actual strikes). For the fruits of their labor, they pick out the brain and eat it. Credit is given to one lady who refuses to eat it.

BECOME VEGETARIAN! As we are taught the fine art of koshering. Hear Doc intone, "One of the more grotesque slaughter techniques is the method of koshering. Blessed by a rabbi then slaughtered by his hand, (in the film he looks more like a regular old meatpacker) the animal bleeds to death. This is said to be a purifying process, but as the cow chokes on his own blood, I could only feel pity." Me too. And, yes, it is shown in sickening detail.

CRY! As once again we are audience to the senseless killing of seals. Its presented with the sympathy style footage that you probably have already seen.

BE FOOLED! Into believing you are seeing an actual Devil-Cult ripping open a corpse's abdomen and eating all the internal organs. Watch drug induced actors rub and chew kidneys while performing some sacreligioius rituals. Fake, but still not for the squeamish.

SLEEP! While idiotic snake-worshipers try to convince you that their way is right.

NEVER FLY AGAIN! FACES OF DEATH's camera once again brings us up close and personal, this time, to the tragic San Diego 727 mid-air collision. If you've ever wondered just what a human body looks after an air accident, look no further. One of my most vivid memories of FOD is the ballooned-up sausage looking remains of the crash victims. Unreal!

THRILL! To the inept stuntman who crashes head on into a ramp but unbelievably lives.
CHUCKLE! At the stupid stuntman who tries to turn his car into a rocket so he can vault miles through the air and break Evel K's record. Of course he doesn't come close.

By now you get the idea. Ingenuous exploitation doesn't have to be good, but it always has to be sensational. Obviously MPI (the releasers of these movies) made a killing at video box-office (no pun intended) because a third feature, OF THE DEAD, is slated to be released shortly. It promises scenes of actual body creamations and stab wound victims being treated by paramedics.

These films are of the sick, for the sick, and by the sick. A real treat for goreaholics. So, when make believe is just not enough.....

VIDEOMANIA encourages your correspondence. Write to VIDEOMANIA, 2808 Allegheny Ave. Columbus,Ohio 43209

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